



Urban League of
Lexington-Fayette County

*Empowering Communities.
Changing Lives.*

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MAYOR: FUNDS WILL COMPLEMENT LOCAL INITIATIVE

Chandler announces \$1.1 million grant to Urban League to support broadband usage

Lexington – Congressman Ben Chandler today announced that the Urban League of Lexington-Fayette County will receive \$1.1 million in federal stimulus funds to support broadband Internet training in Lexington neighborhoods.

“I am happy to see the Recovery Act at work today in Fayette County,” Chandler said. “We are creating jobs with this investment, and by laying this foundation for economic growth, we’ll see even more local jobs in the future. Congress passed the Recovery Act last year in the wake of the economic crisis to help our country heal and update our infrastructure for long-term economic growth. That is just what we are doing with this federal funding today.”

Lexington is one of seven communities nationwide to receive funding through the federal Broadband Technology Opportunity Program.

The two-year grant will support the Urban League’s work to close the digital divide, said P.G. Peeples Sr., president and CEO of the Urban League of Lexington-Fayette County. “The internet is how we apply for jobs, manage finances, take college courses and communicate,” Peeples said. “It’s hard to compete successfully without access to or understanding of the internet and broadband.”

Under the grant, the Urban League will lead the “Connect Your Community” project in Lexington, working in partnership with the Community Action Council. Other partners and supporters of the effort include the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government, Fayette



County Public Schools, Blue Grass Community Foundation, LexLinc, and the University of Kentucky.

Mayor Jim Newberry said "Connect Your Community" will work hand-in-hand with the expanded wireless network the city is establishing in large parts of downtown to enhance public safety, spur economic development and increase residents' access to the vital information they need to make decisions.

"When the interstates came into communities in the 1950s and 60s they had a profound impact, supporting economic development and improving citizens' access to much of the country," Newberry said. "The same is true for the impact of broadband, the information superhighway.

The city network, funded through a \$550,000 grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and approximately \$1.1 million in state and federal public safety grants, is expected to be operational by this summer. It will help bridge the digital divide by providing broadband access in undercovered areas, particularly in the East End of downtown and in Cardinal Valley. The city's network is also designed to improve public safety communication.

Peebles said "Connect Your Community" will use most of its stimulus dollars to hire local residents who will conduct intensive, neighborhood-based outreach campaigns, teach basic computer and Internet skills, and assist newly trained broadband users to find and connect to affordable Internet service. Grant funds will also help purchase equipment to expand the community's computer training capacity at the League's Technology Center at 148 Deweese St.

"We are very excited about this opportunity to expand our existing technology-oriented services," Peebles said. "We will work in partnership with the city to ensure that people have the opportunity to learn to use the internet and understand the importance of broadband."

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ABOUT THE URBAN LEAGUE

The Urban League is the nations oldest and largest community-based movement devoted to empowering all citizens to enter the economic and social mainstream. The Urban League of Lexington-Fayette County has been in existence since 1968 with the mission to assist African-Americans and disadvantaged citizens in the achievement of social and economic equality. This private, non-profit, social service organization accomplishes its mission by conducting programs focused on education, technology/computer training, senior citizen job-training, community advocacy, fatherhood services, and housing/community development.